

Bureau of Reclamation
U.S. Department of the Interior

*Quest for
Excellent Customer Service*



A Reclamation Snap-Shot

- ◆ Established 1902
- ◆ 17 Western States
- ◆ Commissioner's Offices - Washington D.C. & Denver
- ◆ 5 Regions & 26 Area Offices
- ◆ ~ 6,000 Employees
- ◆ Fact Sheet (handout)

Customer Service Background

- ◆ **Executive Order 12862 - Setting Customer Service Standards, 9-1993**
- ◆ **Government Performance & Results Act, 1993**
- ◆ **Executive Branch White House Memo=s**
 - \$ Improving Customer Service, 3-1995
 - \$ Conducting AConversations with America@ to Further Improve Customer Service, 3-1998

Reclamation Provides Services to 17 Western States





Reclamation Customer Service Initiatives

◆ 1994 - Customer Service Plan

\$ *Principles & Values*

\$ *Identifies our Customers*

- *Water Users - Hydropower - Environmental - Recreation*

- *Cultural Resources - Native American*

- *Reclamation's Internal Customers - Other Public Agencies*

◆ 1996 - Customer Service Initiatives Team (CSIT)

\$ *Members Represent all Reclamation Offices & Regions*

◆ 1997/1998 - Customer Satisfaction Survey

\$ *30% or 3,000+ customers responded*

\$ *Established Reclamation's 1st customer satisfaction baseline at 65%*

\$ *Provided focus for internal customer service actions*

\$ *Results reported to customers and the organization*

Reclamation Customer Service Initiatives

◆ **1998/1999 - Reclamation-Wide Employee Customer Service Survey**

- \$ *45% of Reclamation's 6,000+ Employees Responded*
- \$ *Established Reclamation's 1st employee customer Service baseline*
- \$ *Provided focus for internal customer service actions*

◆ **1998/2000 - Customer Information System**

- \$ *20,000+ Customers, Partners & Stakeholders in a multi-user database*

◆ **1999/2000 - Customer Service Benchmarking Study**

- \$ *1st customer service benchmarking effort by Reclamation*
- \$ *Benchmarked both internally and externally*
- \$ *Resulted in 21 recommendations to improve customer service*

Reclamation Customer Service Initiatives

- ◆ **2000/2002 - Implement Benchmarking Study Recommendations**

\$ *Attain an overall 85% customer satisfaction rating by 2005*

- ◆ **Strategic Plan & GPRA Annual Plan Goal**

GPRA FY2000 Annual Plan - 5 Business Practice Improvements

FY2001 Annual Plan - 5 Additional Business Practice Improvements

FY2002 Annual Plan - 1 More Business Practice Improvement

Our FY 2002 goal is to complete one additional business practice improvement identified from the FY 1998 survey results. By completing this, we will have implemented a total of 11 best practices to realize improved service to customers. Additionally, we will survey our customers to determine the level of satisfaction and other business practice areas for improvement. Our goal is to achieve a 75 percent level of satisfaction, a 9.5 percent improvement from FY 1998.

- ◆ **Customer Service Internet Web-Site**

www.usbr.gov/custserv/

Benchmarking Study Team (BST)

- ◆ **Commissioner's Initiative**
- ◆ **Organizationally Diverse & Geographically Balanced 14-Member Volunteer Team**
- ◆ **Trained**
- ◆ **Self-Chartered w/ Executive Sponsor**
- ◆ **6-Month Timetable with Specific Deliverables**
 - Benchmarking Study Report
 - Recommendations & Implementation Plans

Reclamation Readiness Assessment¹

- ◆ **Benchmarking**
 - Cautioned to Only Partner With Similar Organizations & Processes

- ◆ **Organizational Culture**
 - High Potential for Rejection

- ◆ **Implementation**
 - Low Potential for Leadership and Organizational Buy-In

- ◆ **Operation**
 - Marginally Ready to Implement ABest Practices®

- ◆ **Technical**
 - Recognized Our Staff Had the Skills Needed

¹ Keehley, Patricia, et al., Benchmarking for Best Practices in the Public Sector, 1997, pp. 71-79.



Benchmarking Study Team

BST Study Approach

Adopted USDA Graduate School Approach

- ◆ **Plan**
 - Identify Processes / Products / Services Through a Master Plan, Planning Documents, Research Approach

- ◆ **Collect**
 - Internal/External Interviews & Questionnaires

- ◆ **Analyze**
 - BST Developed One Analysis Process

- ◆ **Adapt**
 - Present Recommendations & Implementation Plans

Study Areas Identified From 3 Sources

◆ 1998 Customer Satisfaction Survey & 1999 Employee Customer Service Survey Told Us

\$ Reclamations Needed Attributes

Single Point of Contact to Answer Questions

Understand Customers' Needs

Consistency - Accurate & Understandable Information

\$ Reclamations Performance Changes

Value Customer Relationships

Customer Relations - Ask, Listen, Consider & Include

Customer Ideas in Decisions

\$ Reclamations Staff Changes

Timeliness of Responses

Accessibility of Staff

◆ 1999 Benchmarking Conference

Reclamation Hosted *Benchmarking Excellent Service Together*

Five Focus Areas for Business Practice Improvements



Point of Contact

Accessible / Timely / Provide Complete Information & Responsive



Written & Verbal Communications

Responsive to Customer Need or Request / Quality / Clarity / Use Plain English / Timely / Complete



Different Customer Groups

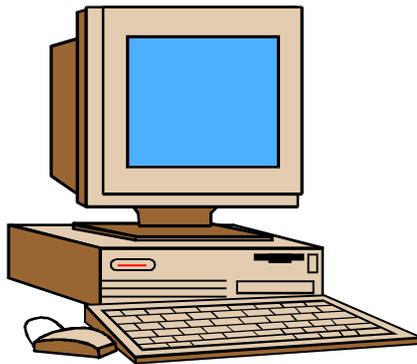
Listen & Understand Input / Consider & Use Customer Ideas / Provide Customer Response & Feedback Processes

Five Focus Areas for Business Practice Improvements



Employee and Customer Training

Employees Aware of Customer Service Policies / Employee & Customer Feedback Processes / Exceed Organizational Customer Service Goals



Resource Aids / Tools to Support Customer Service

Telephone Voice Mail Systems / AHuman@Voice Mail Backup / Telephone Voice Mail Etiquette / Resource Directories



Internal Research Findings

Searched for Internal APockets of Excellence@

- ◆ **Great Plains Region**
 - \$ Dakotas Area Office
 - \$ Wyoming Area Office

- ◆ **Lower Colorado Region**
 - \$ Engineering & Operations Committee (E&OC)

Internal Research Findings

How Are The Area Offices Different?

Dakotas Area Office

Decentralized Points of Contact

Empowered Team Concept B
Matrix Management

Customers Have Direct Contact

Only Centralized Signatory
Authority for Policy Matters &
Monetary Commitments

Wyoming Area Office

Centralized Point of Contact

Customers Contact Area Manager
or Immediate Subordinates

Ensure Every Response is Unified
Reclamation Position

Responses are Provided / Signed
by Area Manager

Internal Research Findings

How Are The Area Offices Alike?

- ◆ The customer service philosophy is communicated from the Area Manager to all employees
- ◆ Customers know whom to contact
- ◆ Assurance of customer responses through documented & structured monitoring
- ◆ Written responses via formal correspondence

Internal Research Findings

How Are The Area Offices Alike? (continued)

- ◆ **Distrust of E-mail for Other Than Data Sharing**
- ◆ **Area Manager & Staff Interact with Customers**
- ◆ **Most Personnel Have Received Training in Interpersonal Relations, & Demonstrate a High Level of Commitment to Quality Management Principles**
- ◆ **Openly Endorse Genuine Commitment to Customers Through Management & Staff**

Internal Research Findings

Engineering & Operations Committee (E&OC)

- ◆ **Narrow Focus with a Single Common AHydropower Generation@ Goal**
- ◆ **Specialized Subject Matter**
- ◆ **E&OC Consists of Reclamation & Non-Reclamation Members**

Internal Research Findings

What the Wyoming, Dakotas & E&OC Customers Said

- ◆ Customers Rank Them at the 75 to 95 Percentile
- ◆ Responses are Timely & Substantive
- ◆ Units Operate from a Sense of Partnership & Trust
- ◆ Adversarial Situations are Virtually Unknown
- ◆ Managers Aggressively Instill a Customer Service Culture
- ◆ Employees Share the Good & Bad News & Pursue Customer Input and Assistance



External Research Findings

- ◆ **BST Applied**
 - ✓ Primary Research of ABest in the Business® Findings Presented & Discussed
 - ✓ Matrix Data Grid
 - ✓ 7 - Element Screen Out Criteria

- ◆ **31 Public/Private/Foreign Organizations Identified**

- ◆ **15 Potential Partners Selected for Expanded Research**

External Research Findings

- ◆ **BST Observed That a Single External Partner Might Be Identified as the ABest in the Business® for Up to All 5 Study Areas**

- ◆ **4 Potential Partners Evolved Through Expanded Secondary Research**
 - ✓ Bureau of Land Management, DOI
 - ✓ Western Area Power Administration, DOE
 - ✓ Bonneville Power Administration, DOE
 - ✓ Farm Service Agency, Rural Development, & Natural Resources Conservation Service, USDA (**USDA Service Centers**)

How We Got from 4 Potential Partners to 1

- ◆ **BST's Mission Centered on Finding an Agency or Office Which Demonstrated Best Business Practices in All 5 Benchmarked Focus Areas**
- ◆ **BST Concluded Only the USDA Service Centers Demonstrated Strong Organizational Commitment for All 5 Benchmarking Focus Areas**
- ◆ **BST Determined the USDA Possessed a Comprehensive Plan to Integrate Customer Service Activities & Employee Training as Part of a Broader Vision**

USDA Research Involved

- ◆ **27 State or Local Service Centers Were Visited & Multiple Structured Interviews & Questionnaires Used Over 5-Week Period**

- ◆ **USDA Facilities in 10 of Reclamation's 17 Western States Were Involved**
 - California - Colorado - Idaho - Montana
 - Nevada - New Mexico - North Dakota
 - South Dakota - Utah - Wyoming

- ◆ **USDA Service Center Implementation Team Washington D.C.**

External Research Findings

USDA State Office/Service Center Findings

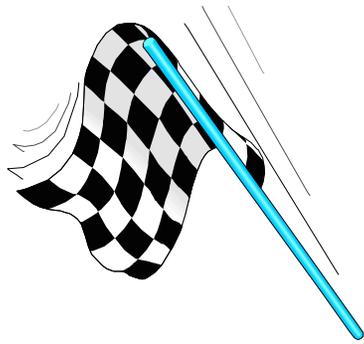
[Farm Service Agency, Rural Development, Natural Resources Conservation Service]

- ◆ Committed to customer needs
- ◆ Supported nationally by a multi-USDA - MOU
- ◆ Nation-wide service center concept situated in rural to urban settings
- ◆ Centers operational for over 2 years
- ◆ Represent multiple types of services to multiple types of customer bases

External Research Findings

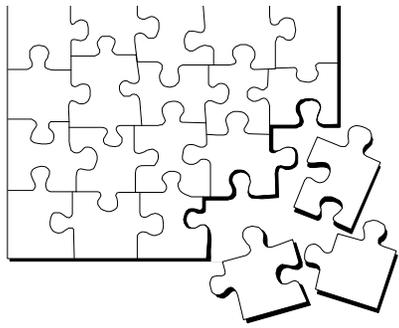
USDA Service Center Findings (continued)

- ◆ **Have a Customer Service Strategic Plan Which Delineates Their Policy, Goals & is Linked to GPRA Goals**
- ◆ **Completed 3 Customer Surveys**
- ◆ **Have Customer Feedback Systems**
- ◆ **Function Both in Highly Centralized & Decentralized Organizational Settings**



Study Results

- ◆ Presented Deliverables within the 6-Month Deadline
- ◆ Commissioner Accepted All 21 Benchmarking Study Team Recommendations & Supporting Implementation Plans
- ◆ Recommendations Address the 5 Benchmarked Study Areas
- ◆ Implementation Spans a 3-Year Timeframe
- ◆ Linked to GPRA Annual Plan & Strategic Plan Goals



Completing Our Quest

What's Underway

- ◆ **Customer Service Leadership Group**
 - \$ Self-Chartered - 4 SES Directors
 - \$ CSIT Coordinates Implementation & Assures via Progress Reports

- ◆ **5 Goals & 21 Recommendations Endorsed for Each Study Focus Area**
 - \$ 85% POC customer satisfaction rating attained by FY2005.
 - \$ 90% of staff who deal with customers possess the necessary customer service skills by fiscal year 2002.

Completing Our Quest

What's Underway (continued)

- \$ 85% satisfaction level attained through POC outreach to customer groups to understand needs, provide timely responses, and accurate & consistent information by FY2003.
- \$ 85% satisfaction level attained for staff accessibility & timely responses by the development & use of tool/resources to aid customer service by FY2003.
- \$ 85% satisfaction rating attained by improved written communications in content, quality, and set to dissemination standards by FY2004.
- ◆ **Actions Initiated & Completed at Local & Reclamation-Wide Organizational Levels**

What's Underway (continued)

- ◆ **Multiple Business Process Improvements Completed in FY2000 & FY2001** *(All linked to GPR Annual Plan Goals)*
 - ✓ POCs Identified & Expanded Reclamation-wide
 - ✓ Internal & External POCs Provided & Updated Via the Internet & Intranet
 - ✓ POC Group Lists & Liaison Contacts Completed for External Associations, Organizations, Tribes Who Interact with Reclamation
 - ✓ Completed Protocols for Written Communications (Internal & External)

Completing Our Quest

What's Underway (continued)

- ✓ ABest in the Business® Customer Service Vendor Training Product Identified & Evaluated by BST
 - Determined Appropriateness for Reclamation
 - Initiated 3-year Plan to Train 26-Trainers & 1,000 Employees Who Interact with Customers
- ✓ Assure a Live-Voice for All Published Phone Numbers
- ✓ Telephone Book AGov't Blue Page® Improvements Recommended to the Department of the Interior
- ✓ Existing & Expanded New Technologies Used to Assure Customer Interfaces
- ✓ Customer Information System Fully Operational

What We've Learned by Benchmarking

Essential Components for Success

- \$ Identify, Understand & Adequately Plan to Address Customer Needs with Recommendations
- \$ Complete a Readiness Assessment
- \$ Attain Management Support & Adequate Resources
- \$ Establish a Structured Process
- \$ Use a Viable Benchmarking Approach
- \$ Formulate Deadlines with Deliverable Products

What We've Learned by Benchmarking (continued)

Essential Team Attributes for Success

- \$ Diversified & Representative Volunteer Team
- \$ Leadership
- \$ Adequately Trained
- \$ Time & Resources Allocated for Team Development
- \$ Individual Team Members Able to Discover, Share, & Expand Strengths
- \$ Sub-Teams to Accomplish Multiple & Parallel Tasks

What We Would Have Done Differently

- \$ More Clearly Defined the Benchmarking Focus Areas Components
- \$ Formalized a Long-Term Partner Agreement with the USDA
- \$ Structured the Implementation Process As 2-Way & Collaborative Rather Than Top Down
- \$ Involved Benchmarking Team Members Throughout the Implementation Process
- \$ Ensured Customer Service Leadership Group Had Regional Director Representation



Quest for Excellent Customer Service

Questions & Answers

Thank You

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